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Joint Military Operations

The Global War on Terrorism:

War or Counterinsurgency?

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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6 February, 2004

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I. Introduction

The discussion that follows examines the strategy of today’s Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of executing the GWOT as a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign vice a generalized war against

terrorism and its sponsors. This paper will argue that current GWOT strategy, instead of weakening, may actually be strengthening the enemy's strategic center of gravity.

Discussion will include the imperatives of strategic and operational COIN planning, as well as the criticality of integrating a fully-representational coalitionⁱ into fighting what is essentially an Islamic militant insurgency. Further, discussion will analyze the feasibility of America's role as the lead military element in today's COIN effort and discuss why American military effort may be better suited, and ultimately more successful, in a supporting role.

Finally, this paper will demonstrate the necessity for U.S. political and military leadership to evaluate the efficacy and feasibility of our current military strategy in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and conduct a thorough reassessment – measured not at the tactical or operational level but at the strategic; not for today's successes, measured by a lack of a terrorist attacks on American soil, but measured in global security and personal freedom in the future. This reassessment must result in the following:

1. A clearly defined strategic center of gravity for the adversary.
2. A renewed effort in fostering critical multi-national and representational support in the GWOT.
3. A long-term, fully representational COIN strategy.

II. What type of war are we fighting?

War is defined as “a legal condition of armed hostility between States”;¹ whereas an insurgency is defined as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict”.² While the United States is engaged throughout the world in fighting non-Islamic terrorists and

ⁱ “Fully representational” as presented throughout paper implies proportional COIN participation by recognized Islamic states

groups, this paper will focus on those Islamic groups. The United States is engaged in, or in the “in the crossfire of”, an insurgency within Islam itself. Though it is an atypical insurgency in that the insurgent’s goal is to overthrow multiple states and not a single state or government, recognizing that this is, in fact, an Islamic militant insurgency is important for a number of reasons. First, if we continue to maintain that this is a war on terrorism, we are placing ourselves on the losing team from the start as we do not have the means or soldiers to continue to fight bloody battles at the tactical level as long as terrorism continues to be a viable, asymmetric means of warfare. Second “...is that if the United States fails to identify the war on terror as essentially a COIN effort, then combatant commanders will never be able to accurately assess the ways, means, and ends necessary for victory, nor will they be able to properly identify the enemy center of gravity”.³ Third, identifying the current conflict as an Islamic militant COIN effort will help us not only to better understand who we are fighting but how to fight, and ultimately in determining if it is America who should be the main effort militarily in this fight.

III. The enemy

On October 21st 2003, the Department of State certified 36 organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).⁴ Of these 36 organizations, 18 are of a radical Islamic ideology and only six have an agenda that is a direct threat to the United States.”⁵

Thus logically we have identified our enemy. Or have we? If we use al-Qa’ida as an example, we are finding that as operatives are captured and killed, al-Qa’ida and its affiliated organizations are dispersing and transferring many responsibilities to lesser-known, mid-level operatives both within al-Qa’ida itself and associated organizations.⁶ What’s worse is that before 11 September 2001, al-Qa’ida and its operatives were conducting one attack every two years; since then, al-Qa’ida and its associated groups have mounted an attack, on average, every three months.⁷

While capturing or killing or capturing al-Qa'ida and its affiliated operatives will be helpful in the short-term, the insurgency will continue as long as there is support for its ideology. "It is this ideology – and the malign intent – that pose the real threat."⁸ Al-Qa'ida's desire to unite the Islamic world is superseded in the short term only by its desire to increase its power and influence by spreading a radical Islamic ideology through what is an Islamic militant insurgency. This insurgency, the carrier of this radical ideology, is the enemy.

IV. The nature of the insurgency

Mao taught us that insurgencies must transit three phases before gaining victory: strategic defensive, stalemate, and strategic offensive. During the first phase, insurgents use guerilla tactics to force overreaction and to sap the will and strength of government forces – raiding when possible and retreating when necessary. With regard to U.S. participation in today's Islamic insurgency, the seeds were likely sown following U.S. recognition of Israel as a state in 1947. The first visible sign of America's unknowing participation in this Islamic insurgency was on October 23rd 1983 when more than 240 Marines, as part of a peacekeeping force, were killed by a suicide bomber in Beirut, Lebanon. The next clear indication came at the conclusion of Gulf War I when there were approximately 5,000 Air Force personnel stationed in Saudi Arabia. It is at this time the name bin Laden is first heard by many in the West when he calls for a holy war against "Jews and crusaders".

These seemingly empty words "uttered from the lips of a madman" were soon followed by periodic attacks on U.S. interests and assets abroad: the World Trade Center in 1993; the bombing of the Khobar Towers in 1996; the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998; the attack on the USS Cole in 2000 and finally the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001. The U.S. response to those attacks and the

subsequent collapse of the Taliban regime was the culmination of phase one and marks the onset of phase two, where America finds herself today.

Mao characterizes this second phase as: stalemate, when neither side can conduct major offensives; a sense of futility or endlessness seeps into the government's troops and populace; casualties and costs mount with no decision in sight; it is during this second phase, insurgents build up their strength and retrain their guerrillas. The current Islamic militant insurgency closely resembles that of Mao's. While the resolve of the United States is not in question, a quick glance at any newspaper on any given day will reveal that both casualties and costs are mounting. Are the insurgents training? Gaining strength? Conducting effective recruiting campaigns? Last October, a memorandum was published in USA Today in which Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld asked, referring to Islamic religious schools, whether the United States was losing the effort to halt the creation of a next generation of terrorists – "Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?...The cost-benefit ratio is against us! Our cost is billions against the terrorists' costs of millions."9

In an Islamic militant insurgency, does the United States have an obligation to respond or should this in fact be the responsibility of the followers of Islam to "police up their own"? Can the United States respond adequately to what is essentially a corollary of an Islamic identity crisis? If yes, how does the United States respond? "The first task...in planning for war is to identify the enemy's centers of gravity, and if possible, trace them back to a single one."10

V. Strategic Framework

In a war on terrorism, terrorism's strategic center of gravity is likely the terrorist's leadership, or possibly the government of a state if actively supporting a terrorist or its organization. In an insurgency - where are the centers of gravity? As discussed earlier, the adversary in this Islamic militant insurgency is both the radical ideology and those who support it, actively or passively. This insurgency is being conducted by militant Islamic individuals, groups and organizations with several things in common: religious baseline, adversary, and in some cases ethnicity and language. While many experts and analysts have differing opinions on whether or not al-Qa'ida desires to "bring the West to its knees", they are unanimous that al-Qa'ida's immediate objective is to "renew" Islam by consolidating power and uniting all Islamic states into a caliphate or super-state guided by Islamic law and principles.¹¹ It is only after obtaining this immediate objective that they aim to unite the Muslim world in a final struggle to overthrow the power of the West. In order to accomplish either of these strategic objectives, one thing is clear; they will not succeed in accomplishing either without the support of a significant portion of the Islamic population. Thus, at the strategic level, the center of gravity must be the hearts and minds of the Islamic people.

America's current strategy as spelled out in the National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism includes the following 6 goals and objectives: Defeat Terrorists and their organizations; Identify terrorists and terrorist organizations; Deny sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists; End the state sponsorship of terrorism; Establish and maintain an international standard of accountability with regard to combating terrorism; Strengthen and sustain the international effort to fight terrorism.¹² While this strategy has enjoyed limited success as measured by the absence of a large-scale terrorist attack on U.S. soil in approximately 28 months, it has arguably isolated much of the Islamic world through perceived American military domination on Arabic soil.

This strategy is effective at targeting the center of gravity at the operational level – al-Qa’ida, as well as the tactical - those organizations that actively support al-Qa’ida. What this current strategy fails to target using the elements of national power is the insurgency’s strategic center of gravity – the hearts and minds of Islam. A strategy to defeat this insurgency as it affects the United States must include: maintaining the backing of those Islamists supportive of American foreign policy; winning the hearts and minds of those uncommitted Muslims; and isolating or destroying those who have taken up arms or intend to take up arms against the United States in the name of a radical Islam.

In order to direct U.S. and coalition efforts at this insurgency’s strategic center of gravity, there are at least three possible courses of action for the United States as related solely to U.S. national interests. The first is a complete U.S. withdrawal militarily, and in some cases diplomatically, from contentious areas where U.S. forces are exacerbating this insurgency, thus invalidating the insurgency’s reference to the United States as an occupier or crusader. This would imply a complete withdrawal from Arabian and Indonesian soil and is thus unfeasible for this in turn poses major economic risks for “a world economy dependent on Arabian and Indonesian oil and presents insurmountable difficulties for long standing U.S. commitments to Israel”.¹³ Further this would likely embolden the insurgency, giving them credibility with a “victory” and thus strengthening the insurgency’s strategic center of gravity.

A second course of action is to maintain our current strategy and continue to fight as we are now – conventionally and unconventionally, offensively and preemptively – with a limited, less-than-fully-representational military coalition and limited Islamic diplomatic and political support. This again, as discussed above, fails to direct our efforts at the strategic center of gravity of the insurgency.

A third, more feasible, course of action is for the United States to facilitate a fully-representational, multi-national COIN campaign in which the United States plays a significant role diplomatically but supporting role militarily. Generating the international and domestic support for a campaign of this type will be an enormous task requiring unprecedented diplomatic and economic efforts. It will be made even more difficult to achieve because by the very nature of this Islamic militant insurgency, the United States must play a limited role.

VI. Feasibility of a “Representational Coalition”

The first question that needs answering when exploring this concept is – if not the United States, which state(s) could credibly lead such a coalition? The state or states at the very least would have to meet two criteria – have credibility among the Islamic community and have the diplomatic, informational, military and economic infrastructure to support the concept.

There are several states and regions that have would qualify, or have the potential, in meeting the conditions discussed above and serving as such a conduit. Turkey, Jordan, Pakistan, the Central Asian States, and possibly even Iran are areas worth exploring. Admittedly, the idea of getting everyone on the same “*Team Counterinsurgency*”, even with credible leadership is unrealistic; the likelihood of achieving the above imperatives and a fully-representational and functioning COIN effort doubtful due to political issues beyond the scope of this paper – the Arab-Israeli conflict immediately comes to mind. Though while the Middle East may not be a feasible area to initiate a COIN campaign, the good news is that the heart of the Muslim people and “....Islam’s center of gravity lies far from Riyadh or Cairo, it lies in a complex series of centers of gravity, each more hopeful than the Arab homelands.”¹⁴

Only a quarter of all Muslims live in the Middle East while over half of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia with the most populous Muslim countries being Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nigeria. If there is any chance for a realistic and representational COIN campaign to work, it must include South and Southeast Asia. Further, this area offers a viable starting point for applying two Cold War lessons learned – containment and the use of international support networks.

Containment. Although costly in terms of dollars for the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) were extremely successful for several important reasons – they helped in containing the former Soviet Union and thus facilitated its eventual implosion; they prevented shifting alliances; and they prevented conflict among the signatories. Applying this same tactic to a COIN model will again be costly but a much more cost effective method of containing this Islamic militant insurgency than the conventional approach.

International support networks. The use of an international support network “manipulated by the Soviet Union encouraged the spread and persistence of insurgency”.¹⁵ This same tactic that was used against us can be used in conjunction with containment against this Islamic militant insurgency. Lacking a centralized Islamic institution, e.g. the Catholic Vatican, recruiting Islamic states to form a fully-representational coalition will be difficult but the key to success in this COIN effort. To provide credibility to this support network, a credible Islamic state will have to serve as its launch site or conduit. The areas and states mentioned above are worth exploration.

VII. COIN Considerations

Embarking on a successful COIN campaign to counter a militant Islamic insurgency is not feasible without overt Islamic support and participation. Joint Pub 3-07, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), lists 6 MOOTW principles or “imperatives” as they were called previously: objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy. Answering the questions posed by these principles provide both the framework on which we must shape GWOT or COIN strategy and criteria for evaluating its success. The most important of which are objective, legitimacy and unity of effort.

Objective: It is this MOOTW principle we must answer first and foremost. What is our objective in the GWOT? President Bush’s definition of victory is as follows: “Victory therefore, will be secured only as long as the United States and the international community maintain their vigilance and work tirelessly to prevent terrorists from inflicting horrors like those of September 11, 2001”.¹⁶ Much has been written as of late as to why it is impractical to wage a war against a means, terrorism, vice an adversary – Islamic extremism. Current strategy has merit as it was developed with valid cultural sensitivities in mind. However, as Micheal Vlahos asks “Is it possible to defeat an enemy we are afraid to name?”¹⁷

Americans are enamored with sports because there is a time limit, there is a score and a clear victor at the end of the game. The lack of a major attack on U.S. for more than two years represents a tie score. While that may be okay for a European nation or areas of the world that avidly follow soccer (in which a tie is acceptable), this in the long run will not satisfy America and thus weaken the U.S. strategic center of gravity – its citizens.

Joint Pub 1-02 defines end state as “the set of required conditions that defines achievement of the commander’s objectives.” Because the end state is the logical point

at which to begin planning – this must be clear. Identifying an achievable end state in the GWOT model is not possible because the “required conditions” and “objectives” cannot be met by the United States, its lead agent. The COIN model offers an acceptable alternative in that it delegates responsibility to achieve the “required conditions” and “objectives” to those capable of obtaining them. More importantly the COIN model assigns accountability.

Legitimacy: Do we have legitimacy? Growing numbers of Muslims surveyed after the invasion of Iraq say they see the American war on terrorism as a campaign to weaken Muslims - a charge long made by radical Islamists and majorities in seven of eight predominantly Muslim countries say they worry that the United States might threaten their countries.¹⁸ To achieve this core MOOTW imperative in a COIN campaign this perception must change and will require the United States to work in a subordinate role when operating outside of U.S. territorial boundaries. Above all, legitimacy will require compromise with Islamic states and regional leaders, some of whom we are currently at odds with. This is not without precedent. “The U.S. chose to fight alongside Stalin to defeat Hitler, and it effectively became a co-belligerent with Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s war with the Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iran.”¹⁹ In both cases, “the United States allied itself with two of the 20th Century’s greatest practitioners of state terrorism for the purpose of defeating what it at the time regarded as the greater evil.”²⁰

Unity of Effort: Do we have unity of effort? If we are not integrating legitimate Islamic states to counter a radical Islamic ideology we can not achieve this fundamental principle. “Mao’s “people’s war” model of insurgency was successful less because it was truly new or innovative than because it was holistic, integrated, and synchronized while efforts of the counterinsurgents were sometimes astrategic or, at best, torn by contradictory and counterproductive practices”.²¹ “Although al-Qa’ida threatens both

Western and Muslim countries, only the West – primarily the U.S. – has the diplomatic, political, economic and military means to set the agenda against this insurgency;²² “In order to win” and achieve unity of effort, “the West and the Muslim world must embark on a new relationship, one that counters the status quo ante that gave rise to al-Qa’ida.”²³

A good example of potential enhancement of current capabilities, was recently demonstrated by Pakistan, part of our current GWOT coalition. In late-January elements of the Pakistan armed forces surrounded an area and issued tribal elders an ultimatum and a list of possible al-Qa’ida supporters; the result – over a thousand local leaders captured and handed over 42 of 72 suspects.²⁴ The United States must continue to capitalize on this type of success for ultimately it is within the states’ national and vital interests to secure their borders from within.

VIII. GWOT vs. COIN

Because the strategic center of gravity in this COIN effort is the hearts and minds of the Muslim people, any military or political actions that adversely affect this center of gravity are to be avoided. The decision to commit militarily requires U.S. political and military leaders to carefully analyze both the strategy of our adversary and U.S. perception in those states in which our adversary operates.

In our current strategy, the GWOT model focuses its effort at two centers of gravity (see figure 1). At the strategic level the center of gravity is the complicit state’s government; at the operational level it is the terrorist group or its affiliates. This model uses primarily the military element of national power to attack the operational center of gravity and, when deemed necessary, the strategic. While this may succeed in protecting

the U.S. strategic center of gravity - its people, in the short-term, it is not viable long-term.

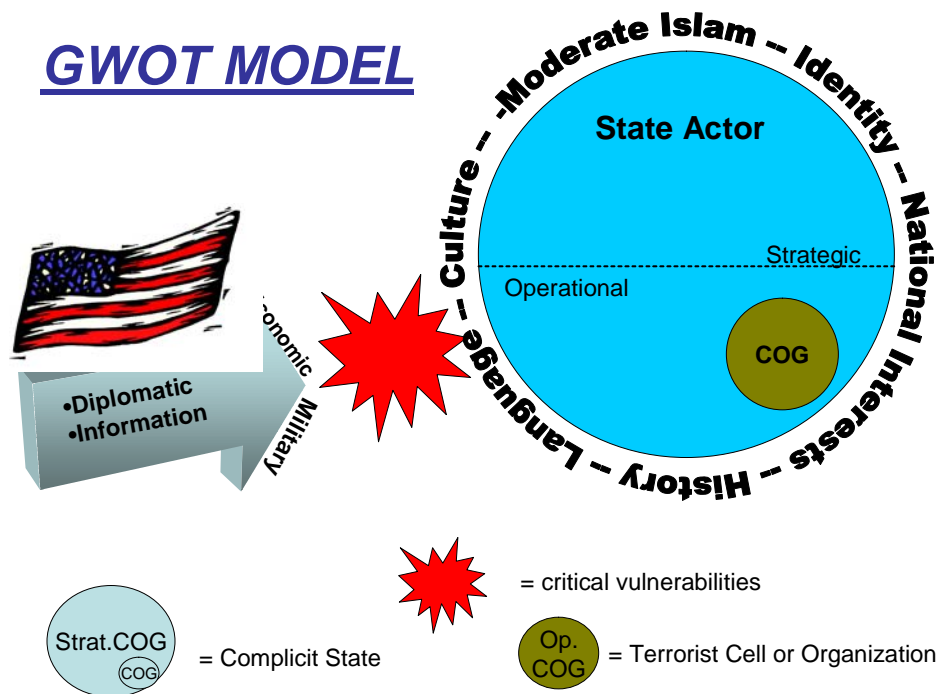


Figure 1

The feasibility of this model fails in two significant ways. First, this model uses primarily the military element of U.S. national power to accomplish the objective thus requiring the execution of a military operation in a legitimate, by international law, sovereign state. “One only has to imagine the roles reversed and to ask what the U.S. response would or should be if a foreign government insisted on jurisdictional primacy for a terrorist crime within the United States in which the foreign states citizens were the victims.”²⁵ Secondly, and more importantly if one considers the perception of the United States as a critical factor or vulnerability due to its affect on the adversary’s strategic center of gravity, the unilateral- or limited-multilateral attack on a sovereign state will damage legitimacy, strengthen the enemy strategic center of gravity and, arguably, further expose the U.S. strategic center of gravity mid- to long-term.

The COIN or indirect model identifies moderate Islam as the strategic center of gravity within a state and al-Qa'ida or affiliate at the operational level (see figure 2). U.S. strategy in this model uses the diplomatic, informational and economic elements of national power – through associate coalition members where applicable – to “attack” the strategic center of gravity while the military element, in a subordinate role to coalition or host nation military, attacks the operational center of gravity. While this course of action is oversimplified and assumes a fully-representational coalition mentality or presence; it provides two distinct advantages over the GWOT model in that it avoids adversely affecting the strategic center of gravity and reduces risk of a loss of U.S. credibility.

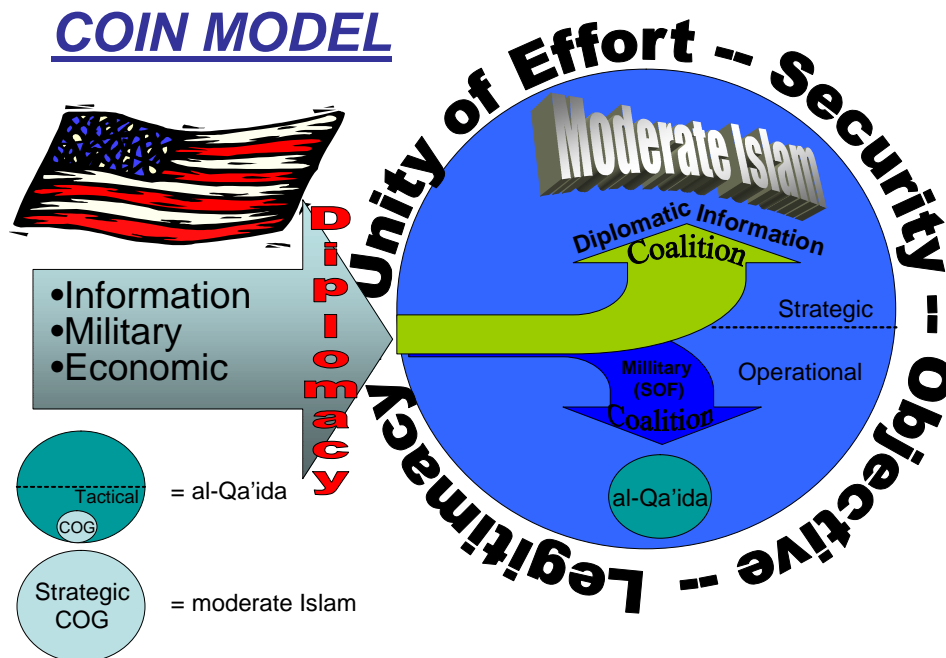


Figure 2

IX. U.S. Military considerations

For reasons stated throughout this paper, fighting this Islamic militant insurgency does not require an increased U.S. military presence but a significant decrease, replaced with resources, assets and forces tailored to COIN operations. The primary means of

U.S. military support in a coalition COIN effort should be through extensive security assistance programs focused on COIN training, equipment and communications infrastructure. The latter is especially important due the transnational nature of the adversary. The development of a coalition-communications-network would prove extremely beneficial to a global COIN effort in that it would both enhance host nation capabilities as well as facilitate international cooperation and information sharing.

The scope, mission and employment of U.S. forces in a representational COIN “coalition” would vary based on a plethora of situational, diplomatic and political factors and thus impractical to discuss in any detail. In any case, the “supporting” role of the combatant commander in a COIN effort will be by no means minimal. FM 90-8, Counterguerilla Operations, states: The introduction of US combat forces into an insurgency to conduct counterguerilla operations is something that is done when all other US and host country responses have been inadequate; US combat forces are never the first units into a country.

In states or regions receptive to a COIN concept, initial deployments would initially be low visibility, minimal footprint, and rapport building operations. Long-term U.S. military commitments in support of this effort however, would be substantial in terms of duration. Because of the sensitivities and nature of operations discussed above, political and legal constraints, and fear of repercussions in technology and training transfer, U.S. forces would likely have an advisory-type profile. A mission profile of this type would typically fall under Foreign Internal Defense (FID) to be executed by Army, Navy, and Air Force special operations forces (SOF).

FM 31-20-3, Foreign Internal Defense, defines FID as: The participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the actions or programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and

insurgency. “To SOF however, FID has a broader meaning that encompasses a myriad of internal, external, and transnational threats....SOF, as the Army’s asymmetric or unconventional capability designed to instigate, support, and synchronize indigenous forces, is the natural choice to assist U.S. allies in confronting such threats.”²⁶

While roles would vary, at the very least SOF presence would ultimately enhance U.S. intelligence capabilities by filling the gap between human intelligence (HUMINT) and technical intelligence (TECHINT) – a critical vulnerability thus far in the U.S. GWOT. SOF language capabilities, regional knowledge and low profile are ideally suited for countries that are sensitive to U.S. presence and will provide an incremental, low risk approach to diplomacy in politically sensitive regions or states.

Affluence and technology have enabled the United States to wage modern, conventional war faster and more efficiently – ultimately leading the United States to measure its combat efficiency by the amount of time it requires to deploy, accomplish the mission and redeploy. This focus on efficiency has led to an erosion of the core SOF competencies in language and field craft. As discussed earlier, insurgencies do not bide by a timeline, they use the protracted nature of an insurgency to their advantage. Successful FID and Unconventional Warfare (UW) missions take years, not months, to accomplish as they are designed to build up the credibility and capability of the government as in FID or to build popular support for the guerilla as in UW.

While a long-term SOF approach will obviously require significant assets to be deployed for long periods of time, the benefits will far outweigh the negatives in that SOF will be utilized as was originally intended – in building relationships and developing the necessary in-country skills to accomplish a variety of short- and long-term missions. Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir once asked Osama bin Laden, “What is the secret of your survival?”; bin Laden answered “It's very simple - there is no Lawrence of Arabia now;

there is no-one who can speak Arabic to my fighters, who can recite the holy Qur'an, who can offer prayers with us, who can infiltrate our ranks."²⁷ While COIN may not help SOF elements infiltrate al-Qa'ida immediately, it would certainly be a good start.

X. Counter-Argument

There are many cogent arguments that can be made as to why this COIN by “representational coalition” or indirect approach is not feasible – namely in that such a concept would never gain the cooperation necessary domestically or among Islamic states to gain validity. There are good reasons for this – cultural differences, competing national interests, U.S. policies vis-à-vis states like Iran, Libya, Syria, etc., the Arab-Israeli conflict – the list goes on. Bernard Lewis, a renowned Arabic and Middle East scholar, who was recently credited by both Vice President Cheney and Assistant Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz as having “helped us to understand” politics in the Middle East, supports a preemptive U.S. strategy as a means to promote democracy and thus deter terrorism.²⁸ Using this policy “....to plant the seeds of democracy in the Middle East” as a means to gain stability and ultimately reduce the risk of terrorism is credible.²⁹ Using this policy as a means to defeat an expanding Islamic militant insurgency however, is doomed to failure.

We must again reverse our perspective to that of our primary adversary and its ideology. If there are strong, supportable arguments against the “planting democracy

seeds” theory within the United States - how much stronger, and more credible are those arguments in a Muslim-dominated world and how does that affect the adversary’s strategic center of gravity? A representational coalition to defeat this insurgency lies not just within the interests of the United States and its Western allies but is in the interest of all Islamic states if for only one reason – WMD. It is not a matter of if this Islamic militant insurgency acquires WMD, it is simply a matter of when. As such there must be a semi-transparent structure, a means of coordination, and understanding between Western and Islamic states prior to this event taking place or we truly will experience a “Clash of Civilizations.”³⁰ As we have seen thus far, this Islamic Militant insurgency is waging an unlimited war and will stop at nothing to achieve their objectives. If the group that executed the attack on America on September 11th 2001 had nuclear weapons, would they have used them?

Based on their experience in Indochina and later in Algeria, the French concluded that COIN must mirror “people’s war.”³¹ “It thus required a careful blend of military, political, and psychological efforts including pro-government propaganda, mobilization of the state’s political resources, attacks on the subversive infrastructure, re-conquest of liberated zones, isolation and destruction of insurgent military forces, and diplomatic efforts.”³² It is only by facilitating a fully-representational coalition that we can mirror the “people’s war” and succeed in defeating this Islamic militant insurgency.

XI. CONCLUSION

Achieving victory in the GWOT and defeating an Islamic militant insurgency requires a merging of the two into a global COIN campaign. At a minimum, this will require the following:

1. The development of a prioritized, long-range COIN strategy that is based on information and economic commitment - not unsustainable military or kinetic solutions.
2. A diplomatic offensive and Islamic recruiting campaign without precedent. Targeting Islamic nations desiring, or leaning towards, modernization.
3. Increased diplomatic presence augmented by religious and cultural personnel and increased informational capabilities – religious and cultural attachés, a more diverse Foreign Service Officer corps ethnically and religiously and stationed in areas of concern.
3. Decreased conventional military presence, replaced with unconventional, minimal footprint SOF forces in an advisory role

Operation Enduring Freedom was successful in removing the Taliban, establishing its first constitution, reopening schools and bringing newfound rights to the Afghan women, but there are still over nine thousand U.S. troops in Afghanistan fighting an Islamic insurgency. Operation Iraqi Freedom was successful in overthrowing an adversarial government, and will hand over power to a representational Iraqi government in less than six months, but there are more than 150 thousand troops in Iraq fighting what is a combination of regime loyalists and Islamic insurgents.

Facilitating Islamic participation in a COIN is not only critical for doctrinal and theoretical reasons, it is critical for very practical reasons – we are running out of soldiers to conduct the COIN ourselves. Finally, fighting as a coalition, however difficult it will be to achieve, will save: the lives of our soldiers, the honor of a respectable religion and ultimately, our credibility.

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